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OPPN MPs SUBMIT NOTICES SEEKING A MOTION FOR REMOVAL OF CEC

Opposition MPs have submitted notices in both Houses seeking a motion for removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar

130 LOK SABHA MPs, 63 RS MPs SIGN NOTICES

As many as 130 Lok Sabha MPs and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs are said to have signed the notices. The signatories include members from all the INDIA bloc parties, including AAP. Some Independent MPs have also signed the notice while several others have evinced interest. This is the first time a notice has been moved for the removal of the election commission head

SEVEN CHARGES AGAINST GYANESH KUMAR

- The notice lists seven charges against Kumar, including alleged partisan conduct in office, deliberate obstruction of investigation of electoral fraud and mass disenfranchisement
- The process for removing the CEC is similar to that of a Supreme Court or a high court judge, for "proven misbehaviour or incapacity"

Art 324(5)

OF THE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THE PROCESS FOR THE CEC'S REMOVAL

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

State planning own civil aviation policy: MB Patil

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THE state government is working on its own civil aviation policy to improve regional air connectivity and address viability of running smaller airports in the state. Industry Minister MB Patil said at Vidhana Soudha on Friday that the Karnataka Infrastructure Development Department (KIDD) is formulating the policy and officials are preparing the draft. Already, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have their own civil aviation policies to develop airports and improve regional air connectivity by encouraging public and private investment.

The new policy will examine issues like the fund share pattern between the state and the Centre for air infrastructure

MB Patil, Industry Minister

Patil said that though Karnataka has several airports under the UDAN scheme, many are not financially viable. The new policy will examine issues like the fund share pattern between the state and the Centre for air infrastructure. The state has urged the Centre to extend the UDAN scheme from three years to five. After that, the Centre and state should jointly manage airports for the next five years on a 50:50 funding basis so that airports get enough time to stabilise.

Patil was responding to a question by G Janardhana Reddy, who pointed out that around 900 acres were acquired in Ballari in 2010 at Rs 124 crore to build the airport, but the project has not been completed even after 15 years. The Centre is ready to construct the airport at Rs 750 crore if the land is handed over to it, he added.

Patil said the airport was earlier planned under a public-private partnership model, but viability concerns remain once the UDAN support ends. Airports in Kalaburagi, Bidar and Shivamogga have all faced similar challenges. P7

SAFE PASSAGE FOR INDIA

Iran promises safety for India-flagged vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

WITH India intensifying diplomatic engagement with Iran amid escalating tensions in West Asia, Tehran has signalled the possibility of safe passage for India-flagged ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

The development came after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a telephone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Thursday night, building on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call with President Masoud Pezeshkian hours earlier.

Jaishankar said he and Araghchi discussed bilateral issues as well as coordination through BRICS.

Sources said two India-bound LPG tankers were given permission to pass through the Strait. Confirming the news, Iran's Ambassador to India Mohammad Fathali said: "Yes, because India is our friend."

When reporters pressed him specifically if Indian vessels would be able to transit the Strait safely, the envoy said positive developments were expected soon. "Yes, you can see that in the future. I think after two or three hours," he said.

The security of sea lanes is a key concern for India as a large number of its seafarers operate across the Gulf. Indian officials estimate around 23,000 Indian seafarers are currently on merchant ships and offshore vessels in the wider Gulf region.

According to a statement from Iran's foreign ministry, Araghchi briefed Jaishankar on the latest developments and implications for global security. "The Iranian Foreign Minister stressed the necessity for regional and international organisations to condemn the military aggression against Iran," the readout said.

Araghchi also stressed the importance of BRICS as a platform for coordination during the current crisis. He urged the grouping to play "a constructive role at the current juncture in supporting regional and global stability and security".

The statement described the call as the fourth conversation between the two foreign ministers since tensions escalated.

During the conversation, Jaishankar conveyed India's readiness to expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation through regional and international forums.

DAY 14 | WAR WATCH

DAY'S DEVELOPMENTS

FM Nirmala Sitharaman says ₹1 lakh crore Economic Stabilization Fund created to deal with West Asia crisis

Two Indian nationals killed and several others injured in an attack in Sohar in Oman on Friday

US aerial refueling aircraft KC-135 crashes in Iraq, kills all six on board

Nepal selling half-filled cooking gas cylinders to curb panic buying

Starting Saturday, IndiGo to levy fuel charge for domestic and international fliers from ₹425 to ₹2,300

US lets all countries buy crude from Russia for a month

China to provide $2L for victims of bomb attack on Iranian school

LPG shortage in K'taka may ease in week, 10 days: Min

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FOOD and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa said the present situation of shortage of LPG cylinders the food industry is facing is "inevitable" and it is not possible to supply commercial cylinders to hotels for at least a week as there are no stocks available. He advised hotel owners to use electric stoves, instead of LPG cylinders, and hoped that the situation would ease within 10 days.

He was replying to MLCs M Nagaraju and Ivan D'Souza at the Council here on Friday during the 'zero hour' on the disruption in the supply of cylinders and demanding that the food and civil supplies minister intervene and resolve the issue.

The MLCs said the shortage has affected hotels, with some shutting down, while others pruning their menu. It has affected food preparation at paying guest accommodations, prasada distribution at temples and operation of autorickshaws. The members pointed out that due to the shortage, cylinders are sold in the black market and there was a sharp rise in firewood prices.

Muniyappa said he met representatives from oil marketing companies on Friday morning. "Commercial cylinders would be supplied to hospitals, hostels and residential schools for now for preparation of food. Wherever there is a dire requirement, we would supply cylinders on priority," Muniyappa said, requesting hotel owners to wait for at least a week.

"We are facing a problem now. But we hope that the situation will ease in one week or ten days," he said.

On cylinders being sold in the black, he said deputy commissioners and the director general of police have been instructed to keep a tight vigil.

From weaning the nation away from fossil fuel by offering free LPG connections to over 10 crore households since 2019, the West Asia crisis has forced the govt to go back to coal and kerosene as stop-gap measures

For example, the Madhya Pradesh Hotel Association has advised eateries to shift from 'tawa' rotis on gas to traditional 'tandoors' fired by coal or wood

States have been given 48,000 kilolitres of additional kerosene, over and above the regular monthly quota of about 1 lakh kilolitres, for household cooking needs

Regulators told to permit biomass, refuse-derived fuel pellets, and coal as alternative fuels for hotels and restaurants for one month

Coal supplies are also being made available for small and medium consumers such as hotels and restaurants to enable them to shift to alternative fuels if required
—Sujata Sharma, joint secy, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas

Govt asks restaurants to switch to coal, households to PNG as LPG crisis deepens

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

WITH LPG shortage deepening amid escalation in the war between Iran and US-Israel, the government on Friday admitted that the situation remains a matter of concern.

The disruption in supply of cooking gas has particularly impacted commercial establishments such as restaurants and hotels. To address the issue, the government has suggested commercial users switch to coal and kerosene.

Coal India has issued orders to ensure that coal is made available to small, medium, and other commercial consumers so that alternative fuel options remain accessible.

Briefing reporters on Friday, Sujata Sharma, joint secretary in the petroleum ministry, said LPG is a matter of concern for the government but there is no dry out at any of the 25,000 distributors.

Sharma said the real issue is panic buying rather than an actual disruption in supply for domestic consumers. On normal days, 50 lakh LPG cylinder bookings are made, but the number has now shot up to 75 lakh bookings per day.

To address the shortage, the government has sanctioned an additional allocation of 48,000 kilolitres of LPG over and above the regular quota.

According to the government, there is no shortage of piped natural gas (PNG) and households that have access to PNG infrastructure may shift to it to conserve LPG. Official data shows that around seven lakh LPG customers have the option to switch to PNG.

468 hoax bomb calls reported in state in 6 yrs

BK LAKSHMIKANTHA @ Mysuru

IN the last six years, 468 bomb threat calls and emails have been reported across the state, but perpetrators have been identified in only 14 cases.

Most of the threats targeted schools and colleges, courts, hotels, temples, airports, railway stations, embassies and other crowded public places. The information was provided by Home Minister G Parameshwara in a written reply to a question raised by Congress MLC Madhu G Madegowda in the Council.

Inspections were carried out after every threat call or email, but no explosives were found at any location. Teams from the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad and Anti-Sabotage units thoroughly checked the sites where the threats were reported and confirmed that no bombs were present and classified threats as hoaxes.

Among all regions, Bengaluru recorded the highest number of hoax bomb threat calls. Data showed that 318 such calls were received in Bengaluru over the past six years. Other places that reported threats include 34 each in Mangaluru and Mysuru, 10 in Bengaluru Rural, nine in Hassan, seven in Hubballi, five each in Bengaluru South, Karwar and Kalaburagi and four in Mandya district.

In 2023, Bengaluru alone reported 144 fake bomb threat calls, the highest recorded in a single year by any city in the state during the six-year period.

Miscreants identified in six districts

Investigations led to the identification of miscreants in a limited number of cases. In Dakshina Kannada district, culprits were identified in two cases in 2020, one in 2023, two in 2024 and three in 2025. In Uttara Kannada district, offenders were traced in one case each in 2023 and 2025. P7

ADOBE CEO NARAYEN SET TO STEP DOWN

Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen has decided to step down. "I have informed the Board of my decision to transition from my role as CEO after over 18 years in the job," he said

POACH-PROOF

Congress leaders arrive at a hotel ahead of polling for two Rajya Sabha seats in Haryana, in an attempt to keep the party's flock together, near Kufri in Shimla in Himachal Pradesh on Friday. Meanwhile, eight first-time Odisha Congress MLAs landed in Bengaluru late on Thursday night and are being hosted by Karnataka DCM and KPCC chief DK Shivakumar | P11|P4

SC rejects PIL on menstrual leave for women

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a PIL seeking a nationwide policy providing paid menstrual leave for women students and workers, observing that no one would hire them, adding such a provision would unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes.

The court, however, asked the Centre and competent authorities to consider the representation of the petitioner and examine the possibility of framing a policy on menstrual leave after consulting all relevant stakeholders.

The bench was hearing a PIL filed by Shailendra Mani Tripathi. At the outset, the bench raised the issue of locus of the petitioner and pointed out that no woman herself has approached the court. It was the third petition filed by Tripathi on the same issue.

Deeply rooted PILs, says top court

The bench said the petitions are "deeply rooted". "You are not a bona fide petitioner. This is to create impression in young women that you are not at par with males and you cannot work like them during a particular time."

"These pleas are made to create fear, to call women inferior and that menstruation is something bad happening to them. No one would give them jobs in such a scenario. This is projected as an affirmative right. But one must also think about the employer who has to grant paid leave," said a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justice Joymalya Bagchi.

Senior advocate M R Shamshad, appearing for Tripathi, sought and pleaded for certain guidelines, giving examples of certain states and institutions that have taken steps to accommodate menstrual leave. He said the Karnataka government has formulated a policy to allow menstrual leave and some private organisations are also providing the facility.

The CJI said, "Voluntarily they are giving, then it is excellent. But the moment you introduce it as a compulsory condition in law, you do not know the damage it will do to career of women."

Justice Bagchi echoed these concerns from a business perspective, noting that affirmative action is constitutionally recognised but must be balanced against market realities.

Draft bill moots transgender definition overhaul

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE government on Friday introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha proposing significant amendments to the 2019 Act on transgender rights, including changes to the legal definition of a transgender person and stricter criminal punishment for offences involving forced alteration of gender identity.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill was introduced by Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Virendra Kumar. As per the new definition, persons with socio-cultural identities as *kinner*, *hijra*, *aravani* and *jogta*, or eunuch, or a person with intersex variations or a person who, at birth, has a congenital variation in one or more sex characteristics as compared to male or female development will be defined as a transgender.

Additionally, the proposed amendment says that any person or child who has been, by force, allurement, inducement, deceit or undue influence, either with or without consent, compelled to assume, adopt, or outwardly present a transgender identity, by mutilation, emasculation, castration, amputation, or any surgical, chemical, or hormonal procedure or otherwise will be included in the definition.

While the 2019 Act recognizes the right to self-perceived gender identity, allowing individuals to identify as male, female, or transgender, the proposed bill removes it. Besides, "Only those transgender persons who face "severe social exclusion due to biological reasons" will be recognised and not "each and every class of persons with various gender identities or self perceived gender identities."

The draft retains the maximum of two years jail for offences against transgenders.

Right to change first name in birth certificate

The draft law seeks to empower transgender persons to make consequential changes in official documents. Any person who has been issued a certificate of identity and is declared a transgender, will be entitled to change the first name in the birth certificate and all other official documents relating to their identity, it says

EXPRESS READ

Decision on IPL ties at Chinnaswamy on March 16

Chennai: The IPL opening match is scheduled to be held at Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on March 28, but the venue is still waiting for clearance from the state government. On Friday, an expert committee conducted an inspection at the venue and it is learnt that the government will make a decision on Monday | P19

Kerala govt U-turn on Sabari women entry

T'Puram: The Kerala government is all set to back out of its earlier position of 'no discrimination' at Sabarimala. In its affidavit to be filed before the SC on Saturday, the government will take a position in favour of protecting temple customs | P7

₹95Kcr earmarked for VB-G RAM G from April

New Delhi: As the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, which replaces the two-decade-old MGNREGA, is yet to be brought into force, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that there will be a provision of ₹95,000 crore for the new scheme from April 1 | P11